



To the People of Puget Sound,

July 9, 2012

It has been said about this eastern shore of the Pacific Rim and us westerners that perhaps “no other place in the Americas has the profound indigenous land ethic, the passionate environmental brain trust or the optimistic entrepreneurial depth as this region of the planet.” How lucky we are to share this ecoregion, or what’s called Cascadia or Salmon Nation or to paraphrase the author Tim Egan, any place that salmon can get to, or what Wm. Dietrich calls “a universe in a mountain cradle,” this geographers’ delight: the Salish Sea.

It has also been asserted that “If Nature is humanity’s landlord, we have been getting a rockin’ great deal on rent and utilities and business as usual might be a thing of the past.” We know that last fall the planet reached 7 billion inhabitants. Understanding that in the past 50 years, the global population has more than doubled, we ask ourselves: What are the implications for the 7 million estimated to live around the broader Salish Sea today? We believe that by 2040, the equivalent of another Portland will nestle its way into the 4 counties around Seattle alone whether we plan for them or not. How will we think about “recovery” in a world where the population is growing but the geography isn’t and then manage out 7 generations?

To this we add the twin peril devilishly linked to population growth: climate change. And we have to ask ourselves: Is it folly to labor to restore habitat, take down dams, protect eel grass beds, restore herring, and manage stormwater with hundreds of

millions of dollars of tax payer money while the other climate impact, that sick sister, ocean acidification inexorably barrels down at us? Can we possibly understand the whole system in all its complexities and then make the best choices? But choices for whom, on what time frame, in what context? How will the Mobius strip of science and policy help us understand our choices as we grapple with our need to conform the economy to the limits of nature?

We at the Puget Sound Partnership, along with our regional partners, attempt to answer these questions with this updated Action Agenda, the ambitious roadmap, the science-based framework for recovering a very complex Puget Sound, ecosystem wide, across limited funding and jurisdictional silos by 2020. This improved collaboration included scientists, tribes, local governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies and concerned citizens whose comments and suggestions exceeded 10,000. We garnered broad agreement about what major issues need to be tackled in what order and which crucial questions have yet to be answered by science. And we have with this update begun in earnest, with the help of our partners, to construct a state of the art, highly functional performance management system – the Holy Grail in ecosystem based management large scale restoration projects world wide –undergirded by measurable indicators and strategies that link to our 2020 goals for recovery. Its function is to tell us whether we are on track or not, and if not, why not.

Several things have been made clear to us from our work over the past four years: that as a region, we need to focus our energies and finite resources around a limited and prioritized suite of actions, a change agenda, to effect Sound wide recovery; that conservation and recovery actions happen at the local level; and that support for same comes from the people on the ground, near the cove and up in the watershed who depend on this troubled but treasured wonderland for their livelihoods, their spiritual sustenance, and as the economic powerhouse that is the engine for the region.

It is also clear that the region understands and this updated Action Agenda reflects the need to break with the traditional or historical distinctions between people and the environment, markets and ecological health. We risk losing the good fight

because we can't keep up with the cumulative effects of the sheer volume of people who want to call this beautiful place home. Our experience tells us that our future requires an updated definition of prosperity and the incrementalism of the current restoration and preservation work probably won't assure the same. The health of the ecosystem is a cornerstone of the region's quality of life and its vibrant economy. Considering this is central to our task and our mission.

It is also our hope that with this enormous body of coordinated work linked across the basin in a continuum through our tribal and federal partners, to the state, cities, businesses, counties, and NGO partners, we can better leverage our science-based priorities into more capacity for our local partners to do more of the good work that they are already doing in managing stormwater, protecting habitat, and keeping our beaches safe for shellfish harvest and other pursuits.

The future citizens of this *treasured but troubled water* deserve what Jane Jacobs called a durable prosperity, a resiliency that expresses equally our rights and responsibilities to each other in a world with a reduced carrying capacity. 21st century citizenry requires us to make these conscious decisions – the big and the small that add up to a public iteration of our privately held beliefs. Call that conservationism, environmentalism, just plain good citizenship, or good government. Let's make them together, these decisions, to do the big thing, the adult thing, the enduring thing, and the thing that is in the public interest, the planet's interest which finally is in our own self interest.

Join us as we come together as a region to chart our course for Puget Sound restoration through this Action Agenda, as we begin to secure our right to be considered a worthy ancestor of this region's future.

Sincerely,
Leadership Council of the Puget Sound Partnership

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